

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2020DR001
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Name of Service:	Links Childcare
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Address of Service:	Birch Hill, Clay Farm, Ballyogan Road, Dublin 18
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Eircode:	D18 XFP4
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Name of Registered Provider:	Gillian Kelly
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Service type:	Full Day
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Dates of Inspection:	07/05/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	56	PM	55
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Floor 7 Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St. John's Road West, Kilmainham, Dublin 8
Inspection undertaken by:	H Sutherland and L Magee
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

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Description of service

Links Childcare is located in a residential, urban area of Leopardstown, South Co. Dublin and is 1 of 14 Links Childcare services. The service is registered to provide full day care and education to children aged 0 to 6 years. Opening hours are Monday to Friday between 7:30am and 6:30pm. The service operates from a purpose-built premises on the ground floor of a mixed housing development and comprises of 5 care rooms, which children are allocated to by age range and stage of development. A large enclosed outdoor play area is available to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

There are currently 20 adults employed to work in the service including the person in charge and a chef. On the day of the inspection there were 19 adults present including, 16 adults working directly with the children, the person in charge, a cook and 2 area managers. The registered provider does not work in the service.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance health, welfare and development of child and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 19 Health, welfare and development of child. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Jellyfish, Octopus, Dolphin and Seahorse rooms.

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Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the area managers, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,*
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and*
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.*

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,*
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,*
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and*

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(d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

(1)

- (a) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.
- (b) The designated person in charge was present when the inspectors arrived unannounced at the service. A review of the staff roster showed that a designated person was on the premises at all times during the opening hours of the service.
- (c) There was a clear management structure in place within the service, which was confirmed with staff members and the person in charge during discussions with the inspectors. In addition to a person in charge and an adult to deputise, each care room had a room leader in place.

(2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available during inspection, and discussions with the person in charge, it was determined that 18 new staff members had been employed to work in the service since the previous inspection. Seventeen of the staff members worked directly with the children. Eighteen files were requested for review. In addition, Garda vetting disclosures for three adults were also reviewed.

- (a) Thirty-two written and verified references were available from past employers.
- (b) Four written and verified references were available from sources other than past employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for all of the adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Police vetting was available in respect of 16 adults who had lived outside of the State for a period longer than six months as adults.

(3) Documentation reviewed showed that the procedures specified above under Regulation 9(2) had been carried out before the adults commenced employment in the service.

(4) Documentation was available to show that the adults who worked directly with children attending the service held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework

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of Qualifications, or a qualification deemed equivalent by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE). One adult did not require a qualification.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.

number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,

Compliance Information

- (1) On the day of inspection, there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children to meet their care needs.
- (2) The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained on the day of inspection. There were 56 children present in the service, supervised by 16 adults. The person in charge provided relief cover to the care rooms when required.
- (8) (a) The roster provided to the inspectors by the person in charge showed that a minimum of two staff members were on the premises at all times during the operational hours of the service.

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Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

The inspectors observed appropriate and suitable care practices in the service as follows:

The inspectors observed that play was child-led, and children had autonomy to choose from a variety of their preferred play materials. Children moved confidently and freely around the care rooms, engaging in both individual and group play. Staff were consistently present and attentive, positioning themselves at the children's level to support interactions, communication and engagement. They communicated with children in a calm and warm manner throughout the inspection. The service provides all of the meals for the children including breakfast, a morning snack, a hot lunch and an evening tea. On the day of the inspection, children were observed eating fresh fruit for their morning snack and spinach and pasta for their lunch. Children sat together for their meals, and staff joined them offering support where required and engaged them in conversation. Babies were placed in highchairs and staff sat at their eye level and engaged positively with them. Children requiring additional portions of food were offered more and staff reported that alternatives were available for children if required. Aprons and bibs were placed on young children during meals and painting activities to protect their clothing. Drinking water was available and offered to children with meals and when they indicated they wanted a drink throughout the day.

All of the care rooms had designated spaces for children to take a rest during the day if required. Babies slept in accordance with their individual schedules while younger children slept at a designated time after lunch. Staff reported that children could sleep outside of the designated time if they displayed signs of tiredness. Staff were observed to sit with children during the transition to sleep and provide them with comfort and reassurance. Children's nappies were changed on a schedule and as required. Staff were observed to be respectful to children while changing their nappies and spoke playfully with them, supporting them to feel safe and secure. Older children used the toilet independently and staff remained close by, ensuring they washed their hands. Staff tended to children's personal care in a timely manner, cleaning their faces and wiping their noses as needed. They responded promptly to children requiring comfort and intervened to support children to resolve minor conflicts. Children were observed to engage in outdoor play during the inspection and were appropriately dressed for the weather.

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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

A registered provider shall ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a pre-school child attending the service and that the environment of the service is safe.

Compliance Information

General Safety:

- The entrance door to the service was adequately secured to prevent unauthorised persons from entering and to ensure children could not exit unsupervised. The service had a doorbell system in place and the inspectors were granted access by the person in charge.
- Care plans were available for children who may require emergency medication and staff were aware of the procedures to follow in the event of an emergency.
- Children's medication was stored safely out of their reach.
- There was a shock-absorbing surface in the outdoor area.

Infection Control:

- Pedal-operated, lidded bins were in place throughout the service to appropriately manage waste.
- Children were supported to wash their hands after outdoor play, before lunch, after nappy changing and after using the toilet.
- Cleaning schedules were in place to ensure the service, equipment and materials are regularly cleaned.
- Bed linen was stored individually and washed on a weekly basis and as needed.

Administration of Medication:

- Staff demonstrated an awareness of the procedures to take to ensure medication is given safely if needed, including obtaining written parental/guardian consent and having a witness present.

Safe Sleep:

- Staff were observed to carry out physical checks on sleeping children every ten minutes.
- Standard cots and mats were available for sleep and were used in accordance with children's developmental needs.
- A sleep log was available for review, detailing the room temperature, breathing pattern, colour and position of the child.

Fire Safety:

- Staff adequately detailed the procedure to safely evacuate children from the service in the event of a fire.

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- The designated fire escape routes were clearly marked and free from obstruction on the day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- A cleaning product was not stored safely in a press in the Seahorse room. A bottle containing dish soap was stored in an unlocked low-level press in the Seahorse room, posing a potential safety risk to children. It is acknowledged that the bottle was moved to a safer location when the inspector highlighted the concern to the staff.
- The outdoor area was not free from hazards. A section of a sheet of wood on the wall in the outdoor area used by the Seahorse and Starfish rooms was broken. The wood was decayed and the screws were protruding from the surface posing a potential risk of injury to a child.

Safe Sleep:

- The temperature in the cot room was not maintained at the recommended range of 18-22 °C for sleeping children aged 12 to 24 months. The temperature in the cot room was recorded at 22.6 °C at 12.15pm. In addition, some children were observed wearing heavy clothing while sleeping. This practice increases the risk of overheating and poses a risk to children's safety. It is acknowledged that staff turned on an air-conditioning unit which reduced the temperature to 20.3°C at 12.35pm.

Fire Safety:

- Attendance records for children attending the Jellyfish room did not reflect the children in attendance in the room. The attendance record was reviewed at 11.19am, at which time there were 8 children present in the room, however only 6 children were recorded as being present. This poses a risk to children's safety as the service may be unable to accurately account for all children present in the event of an emergency.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The registered provider submitted the following corrective and preventive actions:

- When the concern was highlighted, the cleaning product was immediately removed from the low-level press and relocated to a secure location. A full audit of all storage presses across the facility has been completed to ensure no cleaning or hygiene products are stored at low level or in unlocked, child-accessible locations. This incident was discussed at the next staff meeting. All staff have been reminded that all cleaning products must be stored in a locked or high-level press at all times, inaccessible to

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children. The presses under the sink units in each room have secure locks, and high-level racks for cleaning products are in place in all childcare rooms. Staff have been reminded to use either of these designated areas for the storage of all cleaning products.

2. The damaged wooden board was removed in its entirety the following day eliminating the hazard. Managers complete a fortnightly premises audit of the facility, which includes inspection of all outdoor areas, structures, fencing, and fixtures. This audit process has been reviewed and reinforced to ensure that any deterioration, damage, or maintenance concerns identified are escalated and actioned without delay. Any maintenance issues identified through the fortnightly premises audit or by staff will be logged and assigned to the maintenance manager for timely resolution, with sign-off upon completion.

Safe Sleep:

3. The air conditioning unit was switched on when the concern was highlighted, bringing the temperature back within the recommended range. This incident was discussed at the next staff meeting. All staff have been reminded of the recommended temperature range of 18-22°C for this age group and their responsibility to monitor the sleep room temperature continuously, take action if the temperature rises above the recommended range and ensure children are dressed in light appropriate clothing.

Fire Safety:

4. The discrepancy was addressed immediately with staff in the Jellyfish Room. Staff were reminded of the critical importance of maintaining accurate, real-time attendance records. The attendance register was corrected to reflect the children present. Attendance recording procedures have been reinforced with all staff. This procedure is included as a key requirement in staff induction training. The importance of real-time register completion has been revisited during a recent staff meeting. Managers conduct daily morning checks of all room registers to ensure children are signed in correctly. Spot checks will be carried out throughout the day to ensure ongoing compliance. Staff have been reminded that children must be signed in immediately upon arrival, not retrospectively.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photograph of the cleaning product stored safely

Evidence demonstrating the damaged wood has been removed

Safe Sleep:

Copy of the agenda for the staff meeting

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Fire Safety:

Copy of the agenda for the staff meeting

Summary Comment

The actions have been deemed appropriate in addressing the non-compliances. The effectiveness of the actions will be assessed on the next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 25 - First aid

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-

(a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and

(b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

Compliance Information

(1) There was evidence to show that three adults working in the service hold certification in First Aid Responder (FAR) training, and two were available during the operational hours of the service.

(2)

(a) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were available and stored safely in easily accessible positions in the hallway and the chemical room.

(b) The first aid boxes were observed to be readily available to the adults caring for the children attending the service.

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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-*
- (a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and*
 - (b) the number, type and maintenance record of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.*
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-*
- (c) an authorised person.*
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) A written record was available detailing fire drills that had taken place in the service. The record showed that the last fire drill occurred on 30 April 2026.
 - (b) The number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises were up to date. Fire extinguishers and smoke alarms were serviced in January 2026.
- (2)
- (c) Written records referred to in paragraph (1) were kept onsite and made available to the inspectors upon request.
- (4) The procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were displayed in the care rooms.